

Washington, D.C. – By voting in favor of both amendments included in H.R. 2642, the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) gave our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan the materials they need to be safe by allotting more than \$160 billion to the Department of Defense and supported expanded GI Benefits for Veterans education. Stating that the war is a tragic misadventure that must end, but in the appropriate way, Congressman Sestak voted for funding necessary to protect the troops until they can be safely redeployed. The legislation includes other important measures to benefit our troops abroad, through policy provisions that require the Iraqi government to take more responsibility for their country's security, and at home, through appropriations for military construction and Veterans hospitals. — “Whatever one thinks about the decision to go into Iraq and the consequences of this war, it is imperative that we support the men and women who wear the cloth of this nation and are willing to sacrifice everything to defend our country and the ideals we represent,” said Congressman Sestak. “I will always vote to fund our troops—until we can set either a date certain or they are fully redeployed from Iraq, which I support—and will continue to fight to assure that they are given every opportunity to succeed when they return to civilian life through measure such as the GI Bill.”

The first amendment, approved 268-155, considered legislation passed by the Senate on May 22, which provides \$165.4 billion to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$99.5 billion of which is allocated for 2008 and \$65.9 billion for 2009. The total is reduced by \$3.5 billion by the second amendment of the bill to help pay for domestic needs. The second amendment, which passed by a 416-12 margin, also improves US policy in Iraq by requiring that State Department and USAID reconstruction aid be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Iraqi Government.

The second vote also funds domestic projects and foreign aid, including a GI Bill that guarantees a full college education for men and women who have served three years on active duty in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. The government will pay for four years of education up to the level of the most expensive in-state public school. In addition, servicemen and women who have at least three months on active duty since September 11, 2001, including those in the National Guard and Reserve, are also given the ability to collect education benefits. Members of the Armed Forces with at least six years of service who agree to continue in the military for at least four more years can transfer education benefits to their spouses and dependents.

Furthermore, the bill includes other important domestic provisions including:

Extended Unemployment Compensation: Extends unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted their benefits by up to 13 weeks in every state.

Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act of 2008 (H.R. 5613): Places a moratorium on six Medicaid regulations that would cut services to seniors, families, and those with disabilities as well as cut payments to safety net providers.

International Affairs: Increases funding for important international outreach efforts including food aid and disaster assistance, refugee assistance, and counter-narcotics and law enforcement assistance in Mexico and Central America

Military Construction and Veterans Hospitals: Provides \$4.6 billion, \$2.2 billion above the President's request, for military construction and veterans hospitals including increases of \$863 million for BRAC, \$863 million for military hospitals, \$396 million for VA hospitals and polytrauma centers, and over \$210 million for the military child care centers that the President announced in the State of the Union but never funded.

Food and Drug Administration: Increased financial support for food and medical product safety.

Bureau of Prisons: Increased emergency funding to meet rising incarceration costs and growing inmate population which previously would have been paid for with cuts to state and local law enforcement.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking

former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.